65p

THE Unexplained

MYSTERIES OF MIND SPACE & TIME

153

Magnetic people
Valentine Greatrakes-healer
Adamski: UFO drama
Sacred symbolism
World of fantasy

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THE Unexplained
MYSTERIES OF MIND SPACE & TIME

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Celestial harmonies

The esoteric symbolic language of planes and solids used in the construction of sacred buildings can be understood only by those initiated into its significance. SPELMAN TIMMINS explains the secret geometric code inherent in the fabric of ancient churches

AMONG THE HOPI INDIAN TRIBE of North America the timing of many religious ceremonies is determined by the alignment of the stars. At particular seasons of the year, the priests and chosen members of the tribe descend into underground shrines, known as *kivas*, and watch the passage of the stars through the vertical entrance slit. Rituals are performed during the time that it takes the relevant constellation to pass overhead. The duration of the entire ceremony, as well as its timing, is thus determined by astronomical – and astrological – conditions.

The motives of the megalith builders in Europe have been the subject of much conjecture, but it seems reasonable to suppose that the megalithic monuments were constructed for a similar purpose. The stars were certainly studied for practical purposes in ancient societies, and not merely for the timing of religious ceremonies; in ancient Babylonia, for example, the time for sowing crops was the 40 days during which the Pleiades were invisible. And research in Britain by, among others, Sir Norman Lockyer and Professor Alexander Thom suggests strongly that megalithic monuments are subtly aligned to form observatories from which the movement of the stars could be accurately charted.

The Christian missionaries who evangelised Britain during the seventh and eighth centuries found a country of heathens who

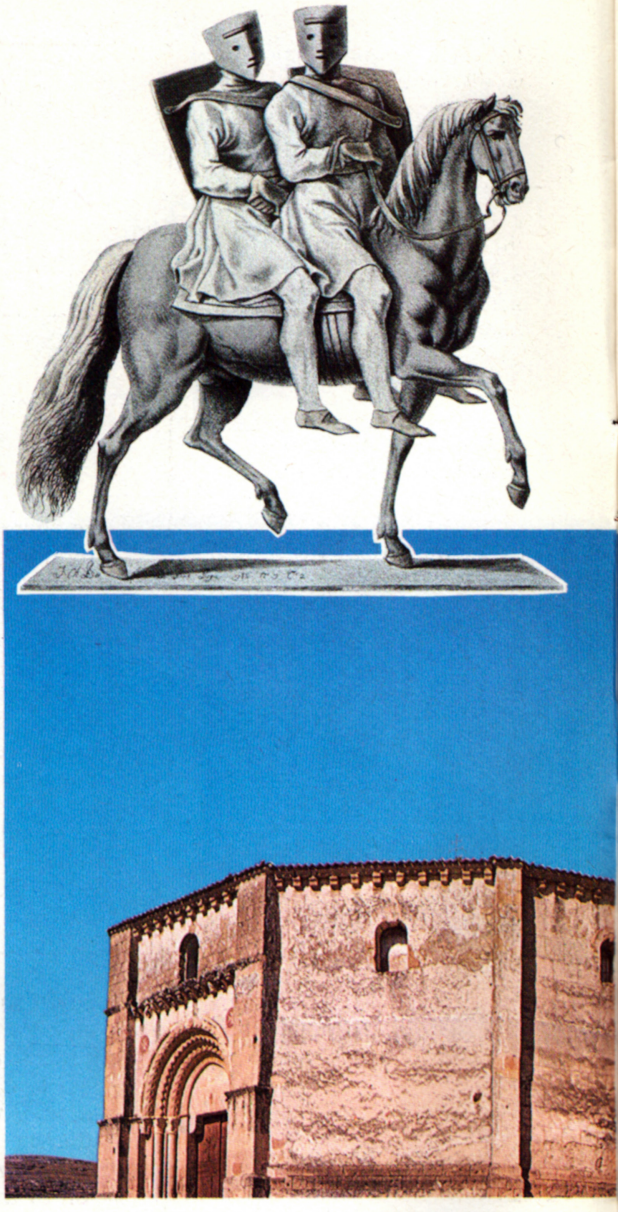
This megalithic tomb at Maes Howe, Orkney, was carefully aligned so that the setting Sun would shine down the long entrance passage only at the winter solstice. Christianity also aligned its buildings by the Sun, and assimilated other pagan practices. A painting (below, by an unknown 16th-century artist) of St Geneviève sitting in a megalithic stone circle dramatically illustrates the blending of Christian and pagan elements

Below: St George and the dragon, in a 17th-century icon from Bulgaria. Christian churches built on the site of pagan temples were often dedicated to St George or St Michael, both dragon slayers, in a bid to eradicate the old pagan religion centred on dragons

worshipped a confused pantheon of gods – a mixture of Celtic and Roman gods and deities of more ancient origin. The missionaries feared that their Christian God would be adopted as just one more divinity on a level with all the others. Indeed, many Christian feasts and rituals were taken from, and celebrated as thinly disguised versions of, pagan counterparts; well into the medieval period pre-Christian festivals at the equinoxes or solstices were celebrated with dancing in churches or churchyards, often led – despite repeated injunctions by higher Church authorities – by the priests.

The custom of dancing at the ancient sacred sites marked by megalithic monuments also persisted, much to the dismay of the Church, which regarded the continuance of pagan religious practices as a direct threat to itself, and was at pains to stamp them out. For this reason churches were often built on the sites of ancient pagan monuments; and were frequently dedicated to St George or St Michael, both of whom were dragon-slayers – the dragon being the symbol of the 'old religion' (see page 410).

Even though churches were built on ancient sacred sites to eradicate pagan influences, church architecture, curiously enough, preserved at least one pagan element: the practice of precise astronomical alignment. Following the ancient tradition of the sacred geometry of the temples of Greece



and Egypt (see page 3021), churches were built on an axis that pointed, not due east, but in the direction of sunrise on the morning of the feast-day of the saint to whom the church was dedicated. When this axis had been determined, the master mason and his assistants would lay out the foundations of the church using a knotted cord, just as their ancient Egyptian counterparts had done.

From the alignment of their foundations onwards, then, medieval churches were designed to harmonise with the world as medieval Man perceived it. As Nigel Pennick remarks in *Sacred geometry* (1980):

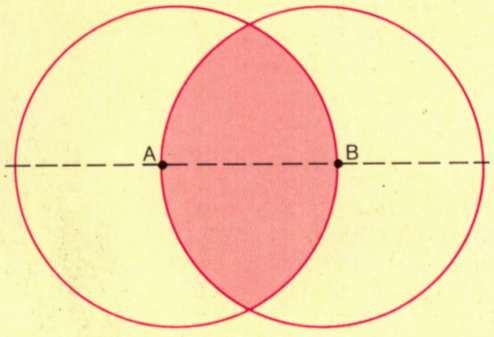
> Physical manifestations of the *summa theologiae*, the microcosmic embodiment of the created universe, cathedrals in their perfect completed form, united in their position, orientation, geometry, proportion and symbolism, attempt to create the Great Work – the unification of man with God.

True enough, the physical fabric of the church was, to the medieval mind, a rich metaphor of the world as organised religion

Left: two members of the warlike order of Knights Templar dressed for battle (in an 18th-century engraving). The Templars built churches with a circular plan, intended to represent the physical universe of material forces, but this was eventually condemned as heretical

Below: the 13th-century Templar chapel at Vera Cruz, Segovia

Fishy business



The sacred symbol of the *vesica piscis* (literally 'fish bladder') is a crucial motif appearing in medieval churches throughout Europe (as in the 12th-century decoration of a reliquary at Limoges, above right). The shape is formed by the intersection of two circles of equal radius, the centre of each lying on the circumference of the other (above). Using the *vesica piscis* it is possible to construct, with only a ruler and compasses, all the regular figures of plane geometry, and so the figure was extensively used in the laying out of sacred buildings.

Perhaps because of this, the *vesica piscis* is seen as the symbol of creation and regeneration – and has even represented the genitals of the Mother Goddess, from whom all physical life springs.

The Christian Church has regarded the *vesica piscis* as a symbol of Christ, because of its fish shape, which was used by early Christians as a secret sign for Christ. The symbolism is reinforced by the overlapping circles that compose the figure: Christ is seen as the meeting point of heaven and earth, spiritual and material, creator and created.

taught man to see it. The traditional nave-and-transepts plan of most churches reflected the fundamental symbol of Christianity – the Latin cross. It also represented the human form. The French theologian Durandus of St Pourçain (*c.* 1270–1334) wrote in *Rationale divinorum officiorum* ('Explanation of the divine office'):

> The arrangement of a material church resembles that of the human body; the chancel . . . represents the head, the transepts, the hands and arms, and the remainder – towards the west – the rest of the body. The sacrifice of the altar denotes the vows of the heart.

By the Renaissance, architectural theorists were using similar arguments to insist that the *only* correct form for church design was the nave-and-transepts plan; among them was Pietro Cataneo who argued, in *I quattro libri dell' architettura* ('Four books of architecture'), published in 1554, that the temple was symbolic of the body of God, and that churches should also celebrate the crucified Christ and therefore take the shape of the cross; thus the church would represent both the body of Man (made in the image of God) and the crucifixion of Christ.

A separate, but parallel, tradition of building round churches came to be regarded, in consequence, as heretical. These churches represent the *imago mundi* (image of the world), and they hold a special place in Christian architecture; the form chosen for the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, which marked the tomb of Christ and (it was believed) the centre of the world, was circular.

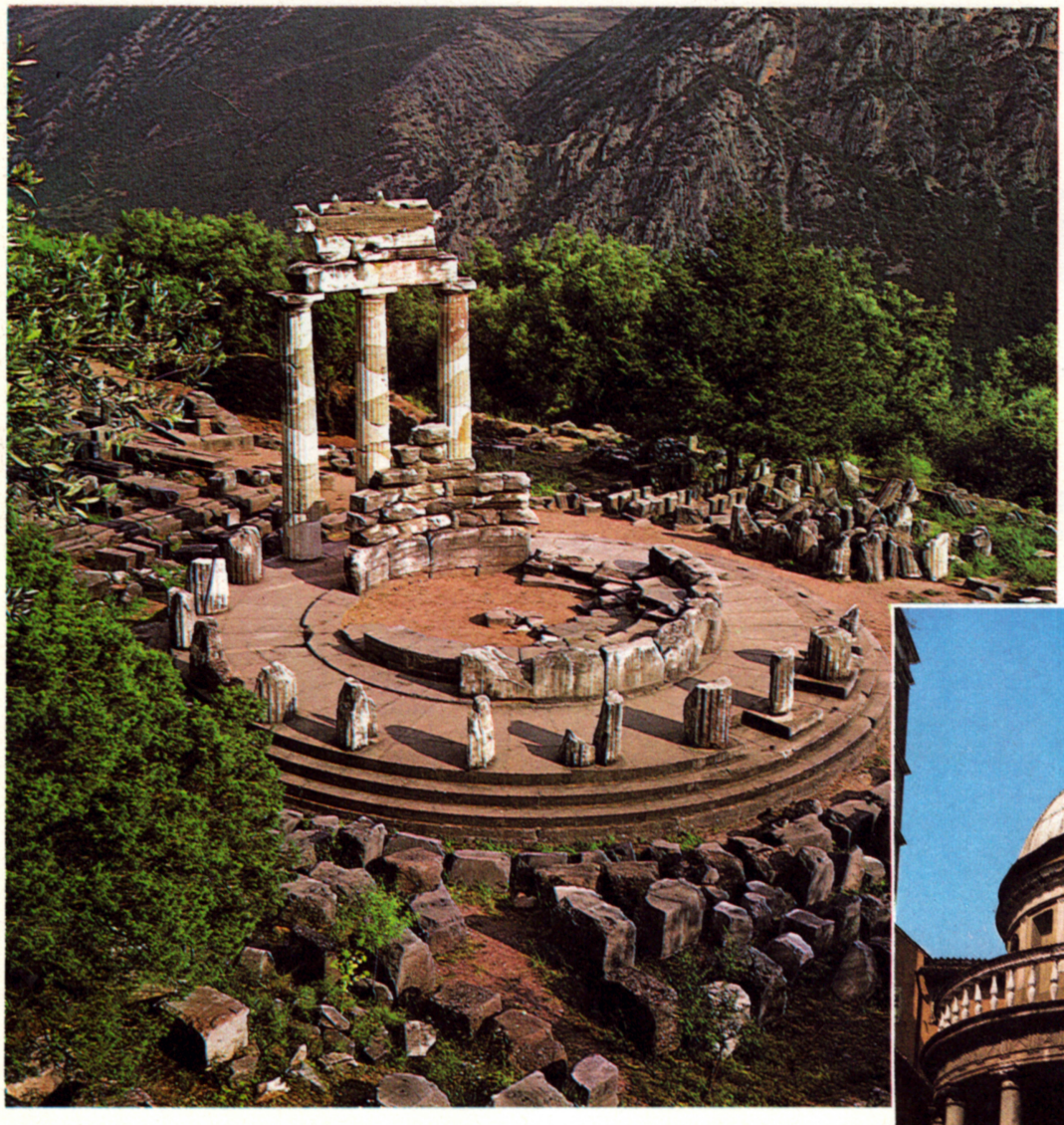
In the late medieval period round churches became associated with the fabulously wealthy military order of the Knights Templar (see page 1821). When the order was brutally suppressed in 1312, its members were accused of numerous heresies – and their form of church-building, too, was branded as heretical.

A battle for souls

Unlike the nave-and-transepts design, the round form did not represent the body of a man, the body of God, or the cross on which Christ was crucified. It represented, instead, the physical universe – the domain of material and ungodly forces. The Templars believed that the place of God in the Universe had been usurped by his evil counterpart, the *Rex mundi* (king of the world), and that these two waged an incessant battle over men's souls in which it was by no means certain that good would win. At the centre of Templar churches stood an altar in the form of a perfect cube, symbol of the Earth within the heavens. It was this open representation of the god of material forces at the centre of Templar churches that so offended the established Church.

With the suppression of the Templars, the building of round churches virtually ceased until Renaissance architects reintroduced

Left: the cruciform plan of Chartres cathedral symbolises both the crucifixion of Christ and the body of Man, made in the image of God



Further reading

Robert Lawlor, *Sacred geometry*, Thames and Hudson 1982
Nigel Pennick, *Sacred geometry*, Turnstone Press 1980

Above: the remains of the fourth-century BC marble rotunda in the sanctuary of Athena Pronaia at Delphi: of its original 20 Doric columns, three have been re-erected. It was classical Greek buildings such as this that inspired the Renaissance architects to revive the round form in church architecture: Bramante's little Tempietto church in Rome (completed 1502) exhibits many classical features (above right)

the form following their study of certain classical temples. It was soon suppressed again by Church authorities, on the grounds that pagan designs should not be used for Christian buildings.

That sacred symbolism of this kind was taken very seriously is clear. And medieval churches abounded with paintings and statuary in which more geometrical symbolism was to be found. The circle was the symbol of the infinite Universe – the cosmos – and was the mother of all other geometrical figures; the square represented the microcosm, the finite Earth. The triangle stood for the Holy Trinity – Father, Son and Holy Ghost. The figure of the *vesica piscis* (see box), too, had a complex symbolism.

In addition to these there were several systems of proportions that, although commonly used in classical and medieval times, did not become fully articulated until the Renaissance. Chief among these were the proportions defined by a triangle whose sides measured three, four and five units, which was derived from the surveying instrument used by the ancient Egyptians; and the so-called golden section (see page 1370), known since the time of Euclid. And there were also the harmonic ratios defined by the Pythagorean lambda (see page 3021).

To see just how far such a use of proportion can be taken, it is interesting to consider a document describing the design of the church of San Francesco della Vigna in Venice. The church had been begun in 1534 under the direction of the architect Jacopo Sansovino. But arguments had arisen over the proportional system suitable for such a building, and a Franciscan monk named Francesco di Giorgi was called in to advise.

Giorgi suggested a system of proportion based on the number three – symbolic, of course, of the Trinity, and also the first 'male' number of the Pythagorean system. The overall system was also related to the

proportions of Vitruvian Man (see page 3021). Heavily symbolic, and rigorously proportional (for those who could appreciate its abstract language), this design system was approved by the painter Titian, the architect Serlio and the humanist philosopher Fortunio Spira. The façade of the church was completed 30 years later by Palladio – who used the very same system of proportion.

The ancient tradition of sacred geometry can be read as an attempt to make the buildings of Man harmonise with the world in which he finds himself, and to be physical expressions of fundamental truths, both temporal and eternal. In the modern occult tradition sacred geometry has an explicit foundation in the natural world: the blurb to Nigel Pennick's *Sacred geometry* says

> Geometry underlies the structure of all things – from galaxies to molecules. Each time a geometrical form is created, an expression of this universal oneness is made. . . . Sacred geometry is responsible for the feeling of awe generated by a gothic cathedral as well as for the 'rightness' of a Georgian drawing-room.

Examples cited to support this include the beautiful double-helix form of the DNA (deoxyribonucleic acid) molecule; the manifestation of the logarithmic spiral (based ultimately upon the golden ratio) in the shell of the nautilus mollusc; and the appearance of harmonic intervals (similar to those in music) in atomic energy levels: all these are manifestations of a transcendent geometrical order. This belief has yet to be proved by science; what is beyond doubt is the beauty of the material language it has generated.

Above: a painting by Canaletto (1697–1768) of the church of San Francesco della Vigna in Venice, the design of which was based on the classical proportions of Vitruvian Man

Left: this 18th-century church mural of the Trinity, from Bulgaria, shows the Father, Son and Holy Ghost (represented by a dove) within a circle – the symbol of the cosmos; the square represents the finite Earth within the cosmos

God made manifest?

'To be is to relate' is the central tenet of the bastardised version of sacred geometry that passes for the real thing in some occult circles: every perceived spatial relationship or ratio is significant – and, indeed, any significance the observer cares to perceive is as valid as any other.

The painting of the *Baptism of Christ* (right) by Piero della Francesca (*c.* 1420–1492) was almost certainly constructed with a conscious use of geometry and the golden section. An exhaustive analysis of the painting in terms of the golden ratio, φ, may or may not be instructive; but what illumination is to be gained from the following interpretation of the painting as merely a geometric allegory:

'$1/\varphi^2$ [the Son] is the ideation of divine manifestation. $1/\varphi^3$ is the embodied universal individual, the Christos. The crossing or overlapping of $1/\varphi$ [the Holy Spirit] with $1/\varphi^2$ [the Son] produces $1/\varphi^3$, the embodiment of Divine man.'

Healing at a stroke

It was almost treasonable in the 17th century to heal the sick by means of touch alone – for such a gift was the prerogative of the monarch. But the unassuming Valentine Greatrakes did just that. DAVID HARVEY tells the story of Greatrakes's remarkable career

THAT VALENTINE GREATRAKES was never burned as a witch is astonishing. For he had a reputation as one of the most extraordinary healers of his time – and that time was the 17th century, when supernormal powers were liable to be viewed as marks of diabolic influence.

That he was never accused of treason for usurping the prerogatives of kings is equally surprising. Traditionally, only the touch of the monarch was thought to be efficacious in treating scrofula, or the King's Evil – yet this was the first disease that Greatrakes began to treat. Subjects who had assumed similar powers in the past had been dealt with harshly on the grounds that pretensions to powers of this kind were a short step from pretensions to the crown. But Greatrakes, who convinced leading figures in society, science and medicine of the genuineness of his gift and the altruism of his motives, was never suspected of treason.

Nonetheless, the openness with which he practised his gift was remarkable, considering the times in which he lived. Inevitably there were accusations of fraud and deceit. But Greatrakes met them head-on and dealt with them publicly. He emerged the winner.

Valentine, named in commemoration of his birthday, 14 February 1629, was destined to be caught up in the political turmoil of his century. He was born into the old English family of Greatorex and was brought up in the Protestant tradition in Ireland. During

Far left: Valentine Greatrakes was brought up in Ireland. He was 34 when he first felt an 'impulse' to heal. He practised the gift for a mere five years or so

Left: Charles II lays his hands on sufferers from the King's Evil – scrofula. It was almost universally believed in the 17th century that monarchs had the gift of healing this disfiguring disease by their touch

the Civil War Greatrakes fought for Cromwell as a cavalry lieutenant. On his discharge in 1656 he was rewarded with a number of appointments, including that of Justice of the Peace.

Greatrakes was a man of some substance, with an estate in Lismore, County Waterford, to his name. He was an eminently respectable member of the community, whose fortunes survived the turbulent flux of politics in his lifetime: even though he lost his newly won civil appointments at the Restoration in 1660, he was later to be made High Sheriff of Waterford.

But in 1663, at the age of 34, Greatrakes had felt what he described as 'an impulse or strange persuasion' to heal. It was as much a surprise to him as to his family. But while the impulse to heal was strong, he was reluctant to do anything about it. He was later to describe the ambivalence of his feelings in a published letter in which he admits to a conviction that he had 'the gift of curing the King's Evil, which, for the extraordinariness thereof, I thought fit to conceal for some time.' When Greatrakes plucked up the courage to tell his wife, she dismissed his notion as 'idle imagination' but gave him the opportunity to test his powers on some of the poor people to whose medical treatment she charitably contributed. Greatrakes later wrote that there was

> one at hand that had the Evil grieviously in the eyes, throat and cheeks, whereupon I laid my hands upon the places affected, and prayed to God for Jesus's sake to heal him. In a few days afterwards, the father brought the son with the eye so much changed that it was almost quite whole, and to be brief (to God's glory I speak it) within a month he was perfectly healed and so continues.

Scrofula, a disease with hideously disfiguring effects on the face and body, was widespread among the population during the 17th century. As Greatrakes frankly confesses, the symptoms could be repulsive, and it was in spite of his squeamishness that he treated people. One sufferer, Margaret MacShane, was described by Dr Anthony, a well-known physician of the day, as 'eaten out with the Evil' and she provided a stiff test for Greatrakes's stomach for this work:

> . . . my hand suppurated the nodes and drew and healed the sores which formerly I could not have endured the sight of, nor touched, nor smelt without vomiting, so great an aversion had I naturally to all wounds and sores.

Over a period of six weeks, Margaret MacShane was cured.

At first Greatrakes felt directed to treat only those afflicted with scrofula. With the advent of republican rule, the ceremony of the King's Touch had lapsed (despite an unsuccessful attempt by Cromwell to continue the tradition himself). But Greatrakes's success encouraged him to become more adventurous.

Above: Oliver Cromwell, in whose cavalry Greatrakes served. When Cromwell became Lord Protector, he attempted to carry on the tradition of the King's Touch – and failed

Left: Joseph Warden, a seaman, dances in the street waving his crutches, after being cured by Greatrakes during his visit to London

The bishop steps in

After a somewhat tentative start, he felt it was right to extend his treatment first to victims of the ague, a feverish, convulsive condition that was also extremely common at the time. Then he began to treat other illnesses. His fame quickly spread, and such was the demand for his services that by 1665 Greatrakes was working at healing the sick from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m., three days a week. So many people flocked to his home that he built extra out-houses to accommodate them. As the word spread far and wide, it was inevitable that his activities would come to the notice of the ecclesiastical authorities. Greatrakes was duly summoned before a bishop's court by the Dean of Lismore and was forbidden to practise. Although he ignored the injunction, no further action was taken against him. No doubt his social standing conferred a degree of immunity from more rigorous prosecution that less respectable members of the community would quite probably have attracted.

By this time, Greatrakes's cures were a talking point. Many people came to see him, from need or curiosity, and so we are fortunate in having a number of first-hand accounts of his work. We learn from Sir Roger L'Estrange, writing in *The Intelligencer*, that Greatrakes 'takes neither money nor present for his cures'. Others described the kinds of condition he cured. A correspondent to the same journal quotes a lady who was

> an eyewitness in her own house of above three score cured by him in one night of deafness, blindness, cancers,

> sciatica, palsies, impostumes, fistulas and the like, who went away by the blessing of God well recovered.

That Greatrakes was not afraid to subject himself to public scrutiny by physicians, scientists or any other interested observers is evident from several sources. During 1665 he made a trip to Dublin, where, it is said by one witness,

> he passed divers examinations, both publick and private, and in the end there was not anything criminal objected against him. I did myself see him stroak several, about twenty of them declared themselves perfectly cured. And I have likewise discoursed with many others that have found no benefit at all by him. And some there are whose pains are returned after they thought themselves well recovered; so that upon the whole matter the world is divided upon him.

The same writer also says that no 'fraud or imposture' was detected and, giving the impression that he had experience of looking into claims of this kind, he adds that Greatrakes had a 'friendly sociable humour, free from popularity-seeking and ostentation, which commonly attends men of his pretensions'.

A testimony to the effectiveness of the healer's treatment is provided by the son of Colonel Phaire, Greatrakes's commanding officer during the Civil War:

> All disorders were not obedient to his touch, but he failed in few. My father, who had the least implicit faith of any man, was in a violent fever, and Mr Greatrakes turned it away in two minutes. He had at another time a terrible ague, which, when the fit struck him, Mr Greatrakes cured in a minute or two by holding him by the wrists and he never had a fit after. He also cured a sister of mine of the King's Evil.

Hands of the healer

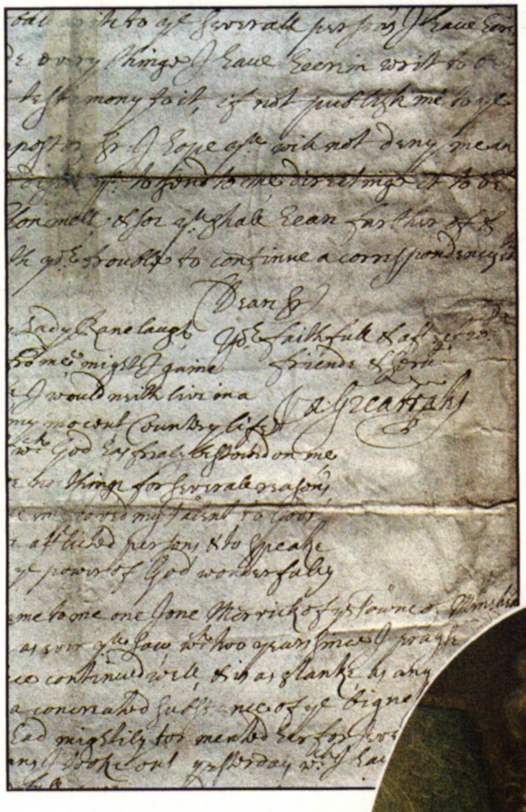
Colonel Phaire's son goes on to observe that Greatrakes 'had the largest, heaviest, softest hand I believe of any man of his time.' It was through Greatrakes's hands that the healing power appeared to flow. As well as placing his hands on the affected part, he often used his hands in a stroking motion, without making contact with the patient's body. This gave rise to his nickname, 'the stroker'. Stroking, it was said, caused limbs to become

> so cold that the patient would not feel the deepest prick of a pin, but as soon as his hand should touch these parts, or gently rub them, the whole distemper vanished, and life and sense immediately returned to these parts.

The stroker's fame spread across the nation; in 1666, the year after London had been ravaged by plague, Greatrakes travelled to England. There he impressed many of the leading figures of society, including the poet Andrew Marvell, Lord Conway – though he was unsuccessful in his treatment of Lady Conway – the diarist John Evelyn, and the chemist Robert Boyle. In the same year, Greatrakes published a letter to Boyle detailing his methods, to which was added a number of case histories and testimonies. This was partly to rebuff the criticism that had been levelled at him. He was not lacking in support: even physicians and academics were prepared to speak up for the benefits of his treatment, although there is a predictable conservatism in the cautious endorsement of Dr Henry More. However, More went as far as to admit that 'there may well be a sanative and healing contagion' involved in the stroker's ministrations. Greatrakes himself was not dogmatic about the nature of his gift, which puzzled him somewhat. But he believed the power came from God and suspected that some form of exorcism was involved.

Greatrakes was subjected to a scientific

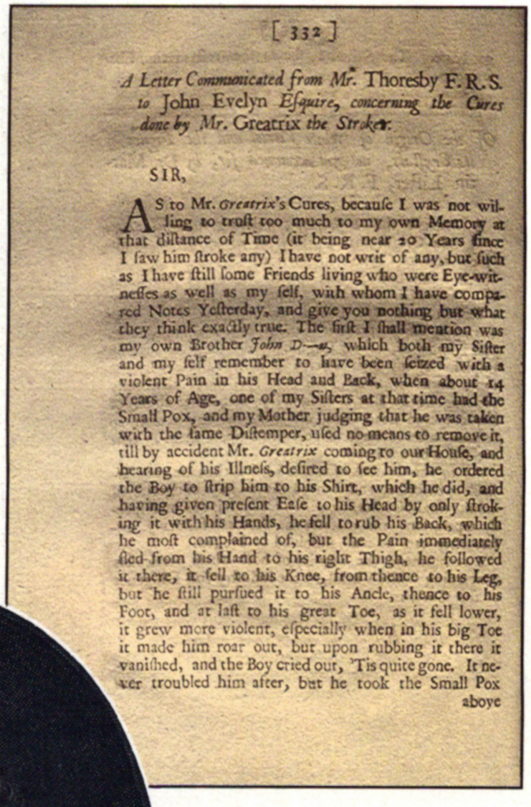
Above: Sir Roger L'Estrange, who in a published account wrote of Greatrakes's refusal to accept money or gifts in return for his healing



Left: Greatrakes's signature appears on this page from a letter he wrote to the scientist Robert Boyle. In the letter he described his methods and a number of case histories

Right: Robert Boyle was one of the great scientific minds of his day. It is no small testimony to Greatrakes that he was investigated by Boyle and found to be a genuine and honest healer

Left: the poet Andrew Marvell – just one of the luminaries who flocked to see Greatrakes's methods of healing when the latter visited London. Marvell came away impressed



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A Letter Communicated from Mr. Thoresby F. R. S. *to* John Evelyn *Esquire, concerning the Cures done by Mr.* Greatrix *the Stroker.*

SIR,

AS to Mr. *Greatrix*'s Cures, becauſe I was not willing to truſt too much to my own Memory at that diſtance of Time (it being near 20 Years ſince I ſaw him ſtroke any) I have not writ of any, but ſuch as I have ſtill ſome Friends living who were Eye-witneſſes as well as my ſelf, with whom I have compared Notes Yeſterday, and give you nothing but what they think exactly true. The firſt I ſhall mention was my own Brother *John D—s*, which both my Siſter and my ſelf remember to have been ſeized with a violent Pain in his Head and Back, when about 14 Years of Age, one of my Siſters at that time had the Small Pox, and my Mother judging that he was taken with the ſame Diſtemper, uſed no means to remove it, till by accident Mr. *Greatrix* coming to our Houſe, and hearing of his Illneſs, deſired to ſee him, he ordered the Boy to ſtrip him to his Shirt, which he did, and having given preſent Eaſe to his Head by only ſtroking it with his Hands, he fell to rub his Back, which he moſt complained of, but the Pain immediately fled from his Hand to his right Thigh, he followed it there, it fell to his Knee, from thence to his Leg, but he ſtill purſued it to his Ancle, thence to his Foot, and at laſt to his great Toe, as it fell lower, it grew more violent, eſpecially when in his big Toe it made him roar out, but upon rubbing it there it vaniſhed, and the Boy cried out, 'Tis quite gone. It never troubled him after, but he took the Small Pox

above

Right: part of the published correspondence between Ralph Thoresby, a fellow of the Royal Society, and John Evelyn, the diarist. Thoresby describes how Greatrakes treated his brother for a pain of long standing – 'chasing' it around his body until it reached the big toe and then vanished

Left: John Evelyn, the diarist, wrote to Ralph Thoresby that Greatrakes's history of cures was 'by no means to be slighted' – though his successes, he believed, did not extend to disorders such as fevers

investigation by some of the most eminent scientists of the day, including Robert Boyle and other members of the Royal Society, and was not found wanting. He was shown to be honest and not out for financial gain. It must also have occurred to many informed observers that, bearing in mind his position, Greatrakes was hazarding a great deal by coming out into the open and stood to gain little by exposure to the public gaze.

A man obviously out for personal gain or glorying in his success would have been regarded with suspicion. But since Greatrakes did not make excessive claims and admitted his failures, his sincerity was widely accepted. Yet when success did flow from his treatment, the results could be remarkably rapid, as the case of Eleanor Dickinson showed. She had suffered for 12 years from dropsy, an accumulation of fluid in the tissues. Details of her treatment are contained among the case histories published with Greatrakes's letter of 1666. After Greatrakes laid his hands on her, she felt a rumbling in her belly 'and brake great stores of wind *per anum et per partem domesticam*', before passing several gallons of water until her belly was 'as empty as a glove or purse, and wraps over'.

Greatrakes died in 1683. John Evelyn, who had been a first-hand witness of the healer's work, provided a postscript to the stroker's career. In 1699, in a letter to Ralph Thoresby, he said:

> To my observation, the cures he commonly pretended to were most effectively on tumours, aches, rheumatisms and other wandering distempers; but did not extend to fevers, agues, pleurisies, etc., where the habit is vitiated. However, I say the history is by no means to be slighted.

The gift fades

No adequate explanation was advanced for Greatrakes's gift by any of his investigators. Perhaps more would have been learned if he had continued his work longer. But the opportunity to study his methods was to be limited, for Greatrakes's career was meteoric. By 1667, about five years after he felt the compulsion to heal, the gift allegedly started to fade, and little more was heard of him as a healer after this date. The consequences of being accused of witchcraft may have played their part in his disappearance from public view. There were many reminders of the dangers. For example, about this time nine 'white' witches who purported to be able to cure epilepsy, among other complaints, were executed at Husband's Bosworth in the Midlands. It is tempting to speculate that the waning of Greatrakes's powers was a pretext for a diplomatic withdrawal from a life that was unquestionably unorthodox and – bearing in mind his social responsibilities and position – possibly risky.

'All the world's

Most people dream only while they are asleep – but there are those who live in a dream world all the time. DAVID CHRISTIE-MURRAY investigates these fantasy-prone people, and explores the uses to which they can put their gifts

IN HER TWENTIES an American woman called Ruth, living in London, was afflicted by hostile hallucinations of her father – who lived on the other side of the Atlantic at the time (see page 2181). These hallucinations affected her senses of sight, hearing, smell and touch as if her father had been physically present. Ruth thought she was going mad but, through the treatment of a wise psychiatrist, learned instead that her ability to fantasise was a gift that she could and did develop and use positively. She was unwittingly what is known as a fantasy-prone personality – and the late developer of a talent that some fortunate people, perhaps 3 or 4 per cent of the population, possess all their lives. These fantasy-prone personalities, like Ruth, fantasise with all their senses.

Dr Sheryl C. Wilson and Dr Theodore X. Barber, of Cushing Hospital, Framingham, Massachusetts, USA, tested 27 female fantasy-prone personalities together with a control group of 25 'normal' women. The fantasy-prone women were selected on the grounds of their extremely positive responses to certain standard psychological tests in guided imagining, hypnosis and suggestibility, and to other tests devised by the experimenters. With two exceptions, every member of the group was university-educated; their ages ranged from 19 to 63 years, with a mean of 28; the women were of markedly varying personalities, yet all socially, emotionally and mentally stable. All but four, in the experimenters' estimation, were either socially normal or exceptionally well-adjusted; the remainder, of whom one had had a nervous breakdown, faced difficulties such as depression. Twenty four had husbands or relationships with one or more boyfriends. It cannot be overemphasised that, aside from their genius for fantasising, the fantasy-prone women were normal people. They were, so to speak, at one extreme end of a curve representing a certain kind of ability; otherwise they were quite ordinary, just as a mathematician, artist or musician, exceptionally talented in his field, may be entirely ordinary in everything else.

The abilities of fantasy-prone people generally begin in childhood. Many of them – like many sensitives – had childhood playmates as real as flesh-and-blood companions whom, they learned through sometimes bitter experience, adults could not see. Not only this, but they 'became' characters from books they read, ceasing to be themselves in a way that is perhaps similar to that in which a great actor loses himself completely in the character he portrays. Fantasies are not without danger – a child who believed she was leading a lamb through a meadow suddenly 'awoke' to find herself alone, surrounded by traffic in a city street.

Above right: *The temptation of St Anthony*, from the Isenheim altarpiece by Mathias Grünewald (*c.*1460–1528), and (right) a painting by a drug addict showing visions experienced as withdrawal symptoms. Research by Dr Sheryl C. Wilson (top) and Dr Theodore X. Barber (above) of Cushing Hospital, Framingham, Massachusetts, USA, has investigated the experiences of 'fantasy-prone personalities' – people who *spontaneously* experience vivid fantasies

A consciously developed ability to fantasise can continue into adult life for various reasons. Adults significant to the child may encourage him through accepting his viewpoint supportively and convincingly as their own. A child may use his fantasy world to escape from isolation, loneliness, a deprived or distressing environment or a particular activity that he dislikes, such as intensive piano practice.

Realisation that they are not like others in their fantasising ability makes adult fantasy-prone people secretive about their talent. They share their secrets with no one, not even marital partners. Some of them find

relief in fantasising with strangers, pretending to be characters other than themselves.

Fantasy-prone people have psychic abilities above the average. The 27 women in the Massachusetts experiment were, between them, gifted in extra-sensory perception and telepathy, precognition (waking and in dreams), premonitions (one subject forecast the Kentucky Derby winners for 10 years in succession – but did not back them because she considered this a misuse of her faculty), psychometry, mediumistic trances, perception of the presence of spirits, encounters with apparitions (one apparition revealed to one of the subjects the existence of a missing will), 'seeing' people's thoughts in images above their heads, dowsing, automatic writing (felt to come from an entity outside the subject), and the capacity to affect the working of electrical appliances. Some 22 subjects reported out-of-the-body experiences. Two subjects claimed to carry out healing, and a third to minister to the dying during these.

Like other psychics, fantasy-prone people have vivid imaginations. They do not merely recall events but relive them with the sights, smells, sounds, tactile impressions and emotions of the original experiences. Many of them have perfect auditory memory. Their recollections, like their fantasies, are similar to films – but films that they not only watch, but in which they play a part. Some fantasy-prone people eliminate unpleasant memories through amnesia. However, they have a tendency to confuse fantasy memories with memories of actual events – for example, sexual encounters.

Fantasy-prone people live an outwardly normal life – but many of them admit to

Above: actor Richard Burton plays a dramatic role in the stage version of *Camelot*. Fantasy-prone people often 'become' characters from books they read or films they see – ceasing to be themselves in a similar way to that in which great actors lose themselves in the characters they portray

spending more than half their lives in a fantasy existence. In social contacts they can fantasise about what is being discussed or described by their companions, or use fantasy to escape from boredom. They often react intensely to stimuli – a mention of Egypt can transport them to a pharaoh's court or modern Alexandria. They can fly from routine or unpleasant experiences into a holiday world, a 'previous life', a trip into the future, travel to other galaxies or a sexual experience with a fantastic lover (in both senses of the word!), who can give them greater orgasmic satisfaction than any human being.

Home movies

In idle moments, or while preparing for sleep, they can surrender to fantasy, setting the stage, creating the plot and characters and then sitting back, as it were, and watching the play unfold. One third of subjects found it better to watch their 'home movies' with closed eyes; to two thirds it did not matter whether their eyes were open or shut. All the subjects, however, reported that they experienced their fantasies with all their senses as real events. To all fantasy-prone people, 'real' life is a shadow of their fantasy existence. To be deprived of the latter would be to them a living death too terrible to contemplate.

As with fantasy-prone children, so with adults, there are dangers and inconveniences associated with fantasies. The fantasy of a child running onto a road from behind a parked car may make a driver brake suddenly and cause an accident, and fantasy-prone drivers have sometimes to try hard not to fantasise. Physical symptoms, even actual illnesses, may result from fantasies. Thirteen out of 22 women questioned in the Massachusetts project admitted having had at least one false pregnancy. Each had experienced several symptoms of the condition, and two had even sought abortions.

Above: Sandy Dennis as Honey in the 1966 film version of Edward Albee's play *Who's afraid of Virginia Woolf?* Honey is a plain country girl whose husband married her because of a phantom pregnancy. Many fantasy-prone women have reported phantom pregnancies; some of them have even sought abortions

Left: the medium Mrs Ena Twigg – who, like many fantasy-prone children, had imaginary childhood playmates whom she was startled to realise others could not see

One of the talents exhibited by many fantasy-prone people is the control of their autonomic bodily functions – heart rate, blood pressure, skin temperature and so on. They have the ability to feel hot or cold at will, a faculty that leads to the consideration that they may be practising some form of self-hypnosis; hypnosis can, after all, bring about physical changes of this kind. Fantasy-prone people tend to make excellent hypnotic subjects. It has been found that many of them respond well to suggestions of age regression and of visual and auditory hallucinations. They also react well to negative hallucinations – that is, suggestions that something or someone who is actually present is not there. They can, however, if they wish, refuse co-operation with a hypnotist as well as therapeutic suggestions made by him.

Well over half the 27 women in the

An early seance-room photograph showing a medium and her spirit guide. Many fantasy-prone people have psychic gifts – and it has been suggested that spirits may be mass hallucinations of their fantasies

experiment frequently experienced hypnopompic and hypnagogic visions – that is, extremely realistic and vivid hallucinations seen in the states intermediate between sleeping and waking, and waking and sleeping. They felt these to be different from their deliberately created fantasies and were relieved and grateful to know that they were not unusual: this kind of vision is often experienced at these times.

The existence of fantasy-prone people is significant for psychical research. Study of their characteristics may throw light on mediums; it is possible that some spirit guides and communications are created by subconscious fantasising. Their existence also challenges the nature of our perception of reality, which we assume communicates itself, by stimulation of the senses, in approximately the same way to everyone experiencing it. Each object affects the senses of all its observers in a similar fashion – from the outside in, as it were. But perhaps there is another, inner, reality, that communicates itself from the inside out, and a proper understanding of this 'mirror' reality could revolutionise our concept of the nature of the world.

There is another possible advantage to such research. Just as the average person is ordinarily unaware of psychical phenomena, yet has perhaps one or two experiences of them during the course of his life, so he may have, very rarely, a momentary revelation of the fantasy-prone person's 'inner' reality, in which he experiences an hallucination as real. This may explain some apparitions; and the knowledge that there are personalities who constantly have such experiences may help the ordinary man to come to terms with the few he has.

Facts and fantasies

Barber and Wilson's experiment revealed that most of their subjects 'could be labelled without exaggeration as "fantasy addicts"'. Of 17 subjects asked to estimate what proportion of the day they spent in fantasy, 11 estimated over 90 per cent. In fact, they found it easier to estimate the amount of time during which they did *not* fantasise; one said that she tried consciously to refrain from it while she was driving, but that otherwise she fantasised all the time. But although she fantasised vividly with all her senses, this did not affect her ability to function normally in the real world.

The women studied in the experiment had some interesting stories to tell about their childhood – when, as a rule, they spent all their time fantasising and could not tell their fantasy worlds from the real world. One remembered her bewilderment when she was finally convinced that Santa Claus did not exist: she could not understand why adults should want to 'make him up' – when all around there were real magical beings such as elves, fairies and tree spirits.

Other subjects reported how they would pretend to be other people – orphans, princesses, animals or birds – and would become so engrossed in the role they were playing that they could not distinguish between reality and the fantasy world they had created. One woman described how she had believed, not that she was pretending to be a princess – but that she was a princess pretending to be an ordinary little girl. She was brought back down to earth with a jolt when she took some of her school-friends home to see the magnificent castle she had described to them as her home – and they, seeing only the middle-class house that was actually there, accused her of lying. She could not believe that they could not see the castle; to her, it was more real than the world her friends insisted was genuine.

The weight of evidence

In several popular 19th-century music hall acts a young girl would demonstrate an uncanny ability to overcome the combined strength of several men. MELVIN HARRIS reports on the 'magnetic girls' and another apparently miraculous act that defied the force of gravity

PEOPLE HAVE LONG TOYED with the idea that physical laws can be set aside by willpower or by specially developed forces within the body. This age-old dream inspired the publicity behind a number of stage acts; so much so that less than a century ago audiences were convinced that they were actually witnessing 'the negation of the iron laws of nature'.

First to succeed with this deception was the 'amazing magnetic girl' Lulu Hurst, also known as the 'Georgia Wonder', in the mid 19th century. She was the 14-year-old daughter of a Baptist deacon of tiny Cedartown, Tennessee, USA. The public were told that her strange powers emerged after a severe electrical storm and a spate of poltergeist-style happenings. Her demonstrations, however, at no time involved the activities of unseen entities. In full light, using nothing but her hands, Lulu made strong, burly men look like puny weaklings. She presented them with a broom handle or long pole and calmly defied them to control it against her wishes.

In one of her feats, two men grasped the pole at its centre, using both their hands. Lulu then simply placed the open palms of her hands on either end of the pole; after a few slight movements the pole began to twist vigorously up and down, and the men found themselves staggering around the platform guided by the tiny girl – laughing at their discomfiture.

In one of the apparently paranormal feats performed by the 'magnetic girls' the girl would hold a long pole horizontally between her palms while two men grasped the pole in the centre and attempted to keep it steady; the pole would begin to twist, and the men would find themselves staggering around the stage. But this 'feat', illustrated (right) in the periodical *The Electrician* in the 1890s, was the result of natural forces, and can in fact be performed by anyone, as demonstrated in a recent reconstruction (above and top)

Another, more spectacular, feat involved an attempt by two men to force the pole down onto the stage. The men held the pole vertically while Lulu stood away from them, nonchalantly stretched out one arm and encircled the pole with her open palm. When the word was given the men pushed downwards with all their strength. They struggled until the sweat rolled from their faces, but the pole stayed poised in the air, while Lulu, palm still cupping the pole, looked on amused and unruffled.

There were many other feats – one involving tipping up a chair laden with four men;

another where she defied anyone to lift her by the elbows – but they were all claimed to have a common factor. They were proof positive of unique 'magnetic-electrical powers' inherent in Lulu's body and under her control.

It soon became apparent, however, that her powers were far from unique, for a crop of imitators suddenly arose and began to match Lulu's act. And for some years theatres and music-halls in the United States were entertained by allegedly 'electric' or 'magnetic' females. The most famous of these imitators was Annie Abbott, who performed in Britain and France in the 1890s.

For a while Annie Abbott convinced the French scientist Dr Henri Goudard that her powers were paranormal. Fortunately, her visit gave the famous magician, J. N. Maskelyne, electrical expert Nelson W. Perry and the physicist Sir Oliver Lodge the chance to study independently 'the magnetic phenomena' at close quarters. Maskelyne published his analysis in Dr Lionel Weatherly's periodical *The Supernatural?*; Perry's appeared in *The Electrician*; while Professor

Most of the feats of the 'magnetic girls' were based on leverage: the reconstruction (right) shows how quite light pressure from the girl's hands at one end of the pole makes it impossible for the men to force the other end of the pole to the ground

In another demonstration of her uncanny powers, the 'magnetic girl' would hold the pole vertically, as shown in the contemporary illustration (right). Then either one or two men would try to force the pole to the ground – but without success, as shown (above) in the reconstruction of the feat

Lodge's was published by the Society for Psychical Research (SPR) in its *Journal*. The three reports drew the same conclusion: all the feats were simply the result of the ingenious use of well-known physical laws. The astonishing behaviour on stage arose from nothing more than the controlled deflection of muscular forces by the use of efficient leverage.

Forceful pole

This can be easily demonstrated by considering the second of the two pole tricks. When the two men tried to push downwards the 'magnetic girl' simply deflected the pole towards her. Since her hand was placed as far down the pole as possible she had an enormous advantage in leverage. As a consequence, the men's strength was deflected upwards in the reverse direction, so they ended up struggling to keep the pole vertical and most of their energy was effectively used *against* them.

In a similar way when the girl placed her hands at the ends of the horizontal pole, she gained immense leverage. With very slight pressure on the ends, she could move not only the stick but the arms of her challengers. They in turn tried hard to resist, but she had only to relax and change the direction of her movements in order to use the men's strength against them and throw them off balance. This was repeated until the men were virtually staggering around, helplessly trying to combat an 'unseen force'.

An understanding of the natural forces used in such acts should have put researchers on their guard against similarly extravagant claims in the future. Yet, just two decades later, another stage act was being hailed as even more magnificent and inexplicable. This time, it featured a man who used no

apparatus whatsoever but could successfully 'reverse the force of gravity'.

The man was Johnny Coulon, a tiny figure just 5 feet (1.5 metres) tall and weighing under 8 stone (50 kilograms). For all that, he was a tough athletic character. In fact, before the First World War he had reigned for a time as the United States bantamweight boxing champion.

After his retirement from the ring little was heard of Johnny Coulon; then in the autumn of 1920 he turned up in Paris with a stupendous stage act. He would appear stripped to the waist and challenge anyone in the audience to try to lift him off his feet. It seemed a rather empty challenge for it looked so simple – after all, he was smaller than many schoolboys and on a large stage he must have looked like a midget. So he was never short of volunteers. But each of these eager volunteers soon left the stage baffled and frustrated. The *New York Times* of 26 December 1920 explained why:

> When Johnny consents, men of normal physique can toss him aloft and twirl him in mid-air; but when he places one finger on the opponent's right arm at the radial artery, Yves le Boulanger and a dozen men other strong men have failed to budge him from the floor. They tug, they twist, until Johnny is bruised and sore, but there he sticks.

In an earlier report the same newspaper had proclaimed: 'Paris puts Coulon second to Newton. Scientists acclaim him as a discoverer of new physiological phenomena.'

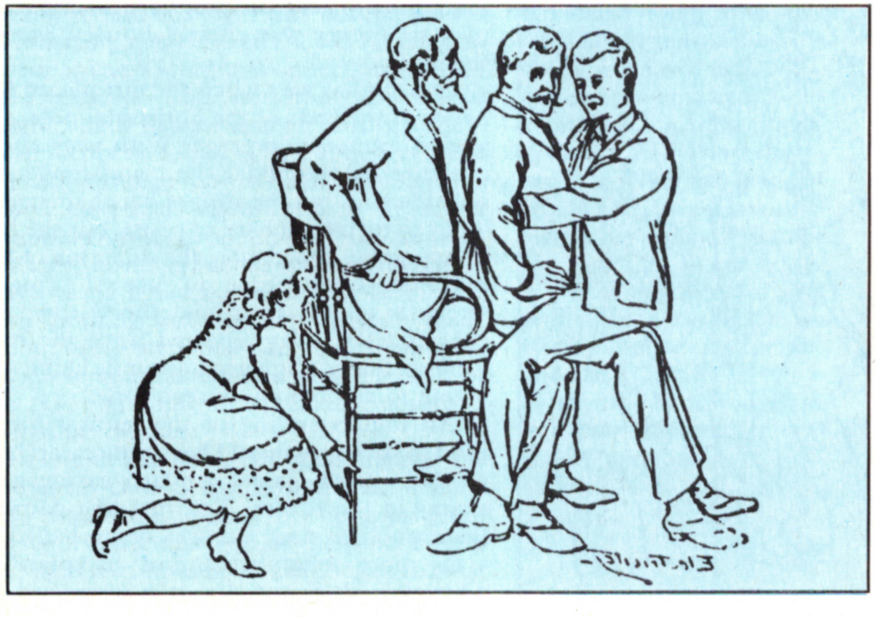
Naturally many attempts were made to explain Coulon's powers. Some said that he could instantly rob his challengers of their strength through the use of his brilliant hypnotic powers. Others suggested that he had metal plates glued to the soles of his feet and huge electromagnets hidden under the stage; these magnets were switched on at a given cue and held him down firmly to the boards. This last suggestion was clearly nonsensical, since magnets of such strength would have wrenched the metal buttons off his opponents' trousers. In any case, Coulon could work just as well with his plimsolls kicked off and with his bare feet inspected just a second before the act began.

For most people, however, these theories were far too commonplace – they yearned for something much more spectacular. Indeed, a section of these sensation-seekers actually insisted on a paranormal explanation. They asserted that Coulon was a medium with unique psychic powers and that these came to his aid when needed. And many believed this.

There were other sensationalists who would not entertain such ideas. In their case they put forward what they thought of as a 'scientific theory' – though objectively it looks more like science fiction. In their view

Below: the escapologist Harry Houdini (1874–1926) being chained before one of his performances. Houdini was keenly interested in acts supposedly based on miraculous powers, and set out to discover the secret of Johnny Coulon's gravity-defying performance

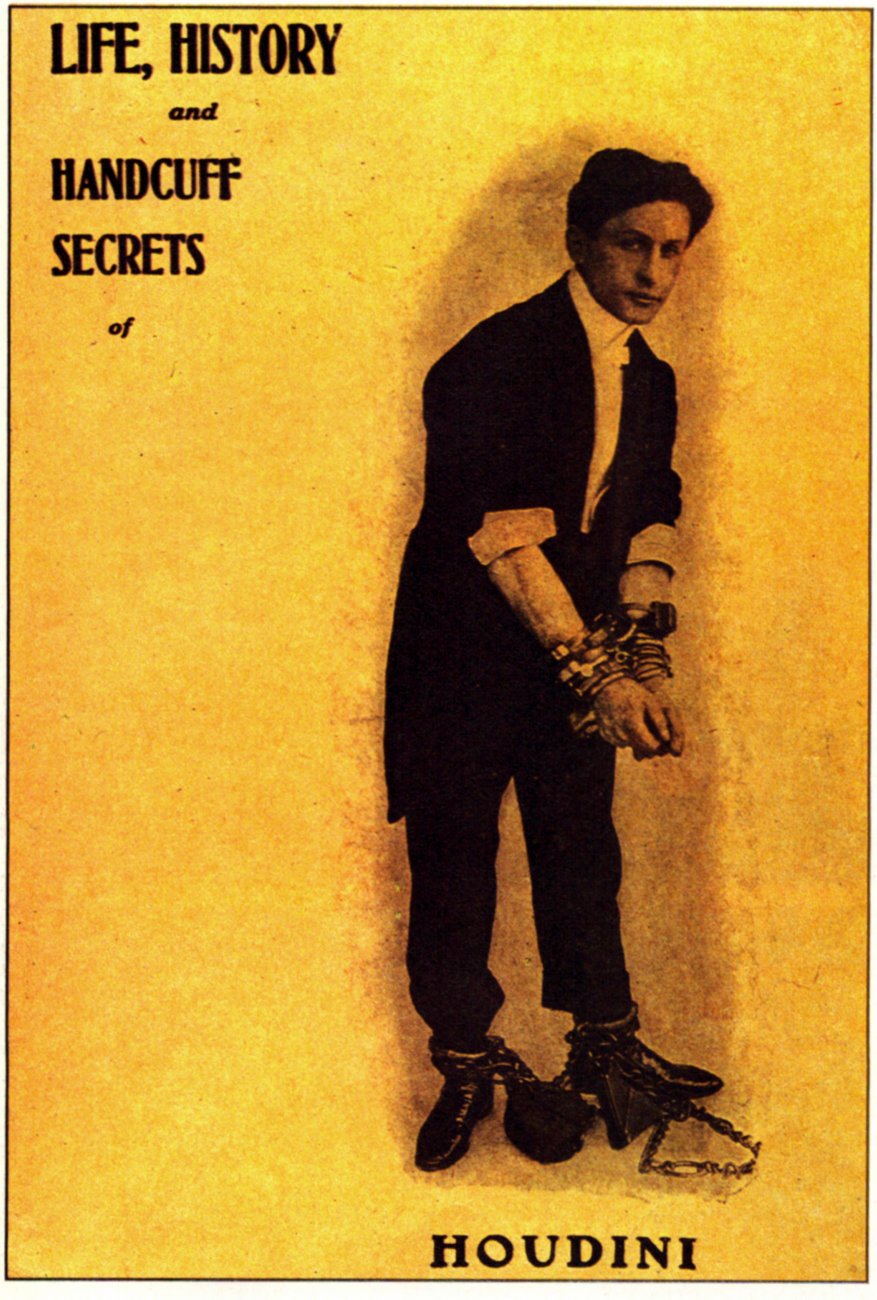
Bottom: a 'magnetic girl' lifting the combined weight of three men (in an illustration from *The Electrician*)



Coulon had discovered a way of reversing the force of gravity itself. Unfortunately, this science-fiction group included some well-qualified scientists who should have known better. To his credit it must be pointed out that Coulon himself never made any extravagant claims. He never once said that he was able to violate natural laws. He was content to make a living by presenting a baffling stage act. If others wanted to make wild statements – that was their affair.

That was the situation when Coulon appeared in New York in mid 1921. The press wrote about his 'supernormal' powers, but he said nothing. These press notices naturally fascinated Houdini. He talked to his fellow magicians but none of them had watched Coulon perform and, since Houdini hated a mystery, he decided to see the act for himself.

Before the act began Coulon's manager



Houdini handcuffed and shackled at the ankles. His ability to escape from almost any state of restraint was also regarded as miraculous, but it was based on his knowledge of locks, plus extraordinary endurance and agility

appeared on stage and made this announcement:

> Johnny makes no claims, being unable to explain the basis of his unusual powers. For many months he has mystified the doctors and scientists of Europe by performing feats before them that seemed to violate natural law and for which they had no explanation. We shall require a committee of ten or twelve gentlemen to come on the stage to test Coulon.

At that point, Houdini nudged his friend Joseph Rinn, who hastened to the platform to make up the dozen challengers. Rinn therefore had the better view but both men were satisfied that there was no hidden apparatus in use. As for Johnny Coulon he did nothing that was in the least suspicious. In fact the only thing he did was to dust himself liberally with talcum powder, but then, every stage athlete did that – to prevent slipping on the stage – so there was nothing out of place there.

As soon as the performance began Rinn watched every move closely, but as challenger after challenger failed to lift Coulon, so Rinn grew more and more puzzled. It was proving impossible to spot just how the trick was worked. Then came Rinn's turn to try.

From about a foot (30 centimetres) away he had to place a palm on each side of Coulon's waist and try to lift when the word was given. Coulon in turn stretched out his right hand and pressed a finger lightly on Rinn's throat; it was at that point that he shook his head, saying that he could not be lifted. And indeed, Rinn found it impossible to get any leverage. He tried as hard as he could but it felt like trying to lift a marble column. So he gave up. Then Coulon smiled and asked him to try again, saying that this time he would allow himself to be lifted. And in a trice Rinn found that he could lift him just like a bundle of feathers.

Simple trickery

When Rinn left the stage he said nothing to the audience, yet he knew exactly how Johnny worked his act. It was based on an incredibly simple piece of trickery – in fact, when he first explained it to Houdini, the escapologist found it so hard to believe that he had to rush home and experiment at once.

Aided by his secretary Oscar Teall, Houdini tried out the trick over 50 times and accepted that Rinn had hit on the right solution. Yet they kept their knowledge to themselves. As they saw it, Coulon was not making false claims so there was no possible reason to prevent him staging his act. In fact they wished him well and admired his audacity.

So what was Coulon's secret? Rinn noticed that the artiste dusted himself with talcum powder even when he was not noticeably perspiring. So Rinn slyly dipped his fingers into the powder bowl and found that it was not filled with talcum. The white substance was, in fact, pure powdered soapstone. When Coulon tensed his powerful stomach muscles, his powdered waist became as smooth as glass and it was impossible to grip it hard enough to gain any leverage. Yet when he wished to be lifted he simply relaxed his muscles, leaned forward slightly and in a split second the lifters' hands would sink in under the ribs and provide all the leverage needed to throw his lightweight frame into the air! And that, believe it or not, was all there was to it.

Yet there are still people who cling to the idea that Coulon was a scientific freak, or a medium – just as there are people who still assert that the 'magnetic girls' had mastered secret powers. But then, as the magician Maskelyne often used to say, 'Give a lie a twenty-four hour start and the truth will never overtake it.'

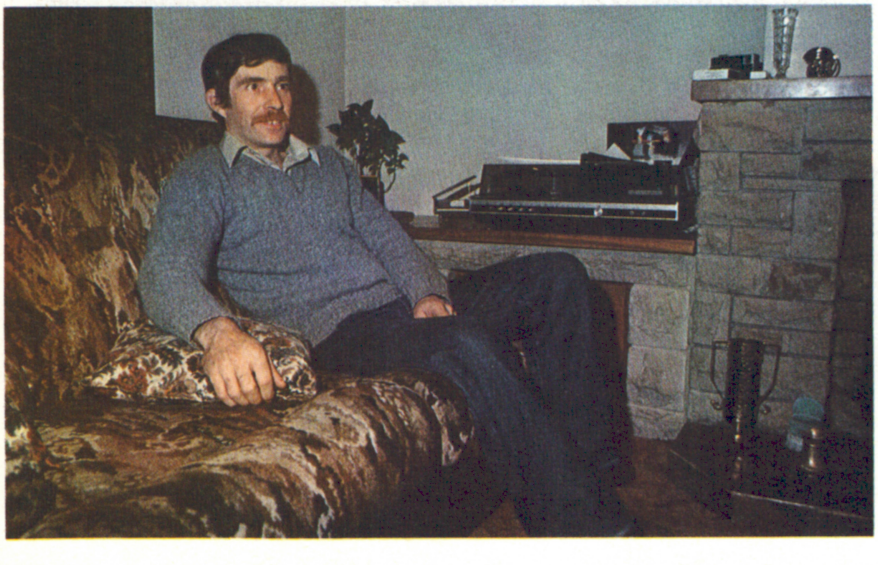
The link between UFOs and the death of Zigmund Jan Adamski seemed no more than coincidence to those investigating the case. Then the media became involved – and the affair hit the headlines as 'the biggest UFO story ever'.
JENNY RANDLES reports

Shock, horror, UFO drama

THE MYSTERY SURROUNDING the death of Zigmund Jan Adamski and the strange UFO encounter of investigating officer PC Alan Godfrey (see page 3010) did not, in early 1981, attract much publicity except at a local level. The regional UFO research group MUFORA began its low-key investigations but did not attempt to sensationalise the case.

Harry Harris, a Manchester solicitor, was to play a leading role in both the police and the MUFORA investigations. He video-taped the initial interviews with Alan Godfrey conducted by MUFORA members Mike Sacks and Norman Collinson (who is also a CID officer) so that they could be studied at leisure by the rest of the group. Harris also filmed the hypnotic regression sessions undertaken in the summer of 1981 by two leading psychiatrists to try to release Alan Godfrey's elusive memories of his UFO encounter.

Harry Harris spent the first half of 1981 investigating the Adamski case – once it was certain that Adamski's widow, Lottie, actually welcomed his attention and free professional advice at the time of her bereavement. But unfortunately Harris's investigations led no further than those of the police, although in both cases it is true that a great many 'clues' were turned up – and came to nothing. Most of these seemed to associate Adamski's death with UFOs. But the matter remained as obscure as ever.



Below: PC Alan Godfrey, one of the officers who, on 11 June 1980, were called to the coaltip where Zigmund Jan Adamski was found – killed, according to some, by a UFO. Five months later, Godfrey himself had a close encounter with a UFO. Was there a connection?

Mrs Adamski was convinced that her husband had been kidnapped and taken to Todmorden, some 20 miles (30 kilometres) away. Unfortunately some of the remarks she made at the inquest were such that it was all too easy for the over-keen ufologist to take them out of context; 'he looked frightened' she said of her husband's corpse – which was, unbelievably, taken by some to indicate he died of horror, presumably when encountering some alien monstrosity. But Mrs Adamski clung to her theory of terrestrial abductors, adding that although she was positive her husband knew no one in Todmorden 'it is like someone has picked him up'. Another witness at the inquest inadvertently added to the 'abductee' hypothesis by remarking, 'I think he has been somewhere. . . . I think he has been abducted.' To some ufologists the word 'abducted' can mean only one thing. To add fuel to their fire there was also PC Godfrey's UFO encounter, which took place so soon after Adamski's death, and in the same area as the body was found. But Godfrey has never believed that the two were connected.

As far as MUFORA was concerned, the Adamski case was a total mystery – just as it was to the police, to the coroner and to

the Adamskis – and as it had no overt UFO connections (despite the rumours to the contrary) the group concentrated its efforts on the Alan Godfrey case. As time passed it became obvious that his 'missing minutes' would not be spontaneously remembered and the only way of unlocking them from his unconscious was to have him hypnotically regressed.

Even so, as MUFORA recognised, the use of hypnosis in such cases is very controversial; too often the subject creates an exciting story simply to please the hypnotist – who himself might, deliberately or not, ask the subject leading questions. Nevertheless it was decided to arrange hypnotic regression sessions with Godfrey, in the hope of gaining at least some fresh insight into his encounter. Meanwhile, the group prepared an interim report summarising the first stage of the investigation, which was published in *Flying Saucer Review* in September 1981.

It seems that some self-appointed UFO 'experts' in West Yorkshire, having read the FSR piece, became obsessed with the case; unfortunately – by coincidence – one of them was due to be interviewed on another subject by his local newspaper. The 'expert' promptly gave an enthralled journalist a garbled version of the 'Adamski abduction' – and the story, changing all the time, rapidly passed from various local newspapers to national

Left: the scene of Alan Godfrey's close encounter (as depicted in Jenny Randles's *The Pennine mystery*), less than 1 mile (1.6 kilometres) from the yard where Adamski's body was found. Godfrey's encounter was investigated by members of MUFORA, including Mike Sacks (below) and Harry Harris (bottom). Harris also became involved in the investigations of Adamski's death – which, thanks to the *Sunday Mirror* of 27 September 1981, was now popularly believed to be a direct result of a UFO encounter; MUFORA, however, could find no evidence whatsoever to support this theory

level. At the end of this media-chain no one was reading the original story, and up to this point no journalist had bothered to contact MUFORA, whose members remained totally in the dark about what was happening to 'their' case.

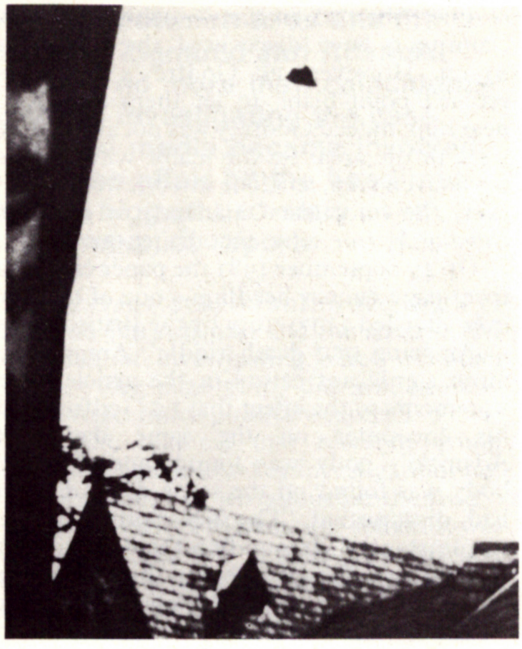
The culmination of this sensationalism came when the *Sunday Mirror* gave the story 'scoop' status. As they saw it, death – as a direct result of an encounter with a flying saucer (their automatic reading of the story) – was naturally banner-headline material. Journalists John Sheard and Stewart Bonney were dispatched to West Yorkshire to interview all those involved: the police, the coroner, the UFO 'experts' – who were now claiming to have 'discovered' the case – and so on. However, PC Godfrey's superiors refused point-blank to let them anywhere near him; indeed Godfrey was not aware they were in the area. So the major witness was never even seen, let alone interviewed. However, the 'ufologists' managed to give the *Sunday Mirror* some tantalising quotes.

On 27 September 1981 the paper carried a front page banner headline – one of the few ever afforded a UFO story by the British press – 'Amazing UFO death riddle'. Among the more significant errors in the article were statements to the effect that PC Godfrey had his encounter on the same day that Adamski's body was found, and that the body was found on the same day Adamski had disappeared. The description of the circumstances surrounding the discovery of the body was fair enough, but the whole tone of the article was clearly designed to lead the reader to conclude that Adamski had been killed by aliens.

In fact, the article was a masterpiece of provocative journalism. It made no attempt to suggest any down-to-earth explanations for the death and ended by stating that 'ufologists' regarded Adamski's disappearance as a close encounter of the third kind – in other words, that he had met – and presumably been abducted by – aliens. MUFORA considered this a ludicrous and quite unjustified assumption: the group had spent several months researching the case and had found not a shred of evidence to support such a theory.

The *Sunday Mirror* had, in fact, contacted MUFORA a couple of days before the article went to press, wanting quotes. The group, not knowing the nature of the piece – and being refused any information about the newspaper's other sources on the grounds of 'ethics' – was reluctant to be associated with the article, and refused to make any comment.

The international UFO group CONTACT, having been alerted to the Adamski/Godfrey



story by FSR, claimed there was 'world-wide interest' in the case and that it was 'the biggest UFO story for years'. Both claims are difficult to reconcile with the facts. None of the MUFORA team, or Alan Godfrey or Lottie Adamski, had noticed any evidence of the alleged global concern. But then it was discovered that one of the so-called local UFO 'experts' who had leaked the story to the press in the first place was a CONTACT representative.

Not surprisingly the West Yorkshire police were unhappy with the impression the media gave that they were seriously treating the Adamski death as 'murder by alien or aliens unknown'. Unfortunately the police blamed MUFORA for the slur, and the relationship between the research group and the police – so necessary for the Godfrey investigations, especially – deteriorated.

But was there any justification for the belief that UFOs were involved in Zigmund Jan Adamski's death?

The Pennine mystery

Some of the data are undeniably provocative: the unfortunate man's surname (see page 3013), Alan Godfrey's nearby close encounter, the unexplained burn on Adamski's body, the bizarre place where the body was left – or found, and Adamski's mysterious five-day disappearance. But all of this is merely circumstantial, and certainly offers no support of any UFO connection.

But MUFORA had been, for some time, researching its book *The Pennine mystery* (1983) and various interesting facts were emerging, such as an unusually high number of UFO sightings reported in the area and bright, rapidly manoeuvring lights that were so common that Pennine residents referred to them as 'mystery helicopters'. These lights seemed to dodge power lines and had outrun police cars that had chased them over the hills at least once. And interestingly, a spate of such sightings allegedly took place in and around Todmorden between 6 June and 11 June 1980 – the very time Adamski was missing. Clearly this offers no overt links between UFOs and Adamski's death, but it may make such speculations a little more respectable.

But what reasonable alternatives are there? Perhaps Adamski chose to 'lose' himself, or perhaps he lost his memory and wandered around aimlessly for a few days, finally dying of a heart attack on the Todmorden coaltip. But there was nothing in his background, emotionally or psychologically, to account for either his running away or an attack of amnesia, and the post mortem revealed no signs of any brain damage that might have precipitated loss of memory. And what caused his curious burn?

MUFORA members are divided in their opinions about the existence and nature of UFOs; the most any of them will say is that their existence is likely – given the evidence – but not proven. Unidentified atmospheric phenomena (UAPs) are a different matter, however. There is a good deal of scientific evidence that indicates the existence of a natural energy emission in the atmosphere. Perhaps it is concentrated in certain areas – the Pennine range being one of them.

Perhaps the unfortunate Adamski came into contact with a UAP, whose energy burnt the back of his head and neck and induced severe shock and disorientation. Finding himself at Todmorden he may have climbed the coaltip to get a better view of his surroundings – and the exertion may have brought on a heart attack.

As with all the other theories connected with this case, there are problems. For example, Dr Edwards, who carried out the post mortem, believes the burn was inflicted a full three days after Adamski's disappearance. And why did no one notice an obviously disorientated person wandering around the same relatively small area for five days?

The mystery remains as provocative as ever – but perhaps some reader of *The Unexplained* already knows the answer?

Two examples of the phenomena reported to be filling the skies above the Pennines since 1975: (left) an unidentified object photographed at 9 p.m. on 11 July 1975 by a police officer in Rochdale who, he claims, was in his bedroom cleaning his camera when the UFO flew past the window; and (below) a very bright light, photographed by Mr Anthony Vaivods at 9.30 p.m. on 15 October 1981, which moved across the sky, pulsating as it did so. Many UFO sightings have been made in the Pennine area, and – perhaps significantly – ufologists noted an increase in reports at the time that Zigmund Jan Adamski was missing

Post script

Your letters to THE UNEXPLAINED

Dear Sir,

In their comments on my article on the Enfield poltergeist case [see issue 141] Mr Playfair and Mr Grosse seem to miss the point I was making about testimony and evidence – namely, that the *quality* of testimony affects whether or not it is acceptable as evidence. Testimony is not enough – for it must be interpreted before it can count as evidence for or against anything or anyone. And in my view, the testimony in the Enfield case – although there is no doubt that it is honest and given in good faith – is not such as to prove beyond doubt that paranormal events happened at Enfield.

I have not the slightest intention of calling into question the honesty of either Mr Burcombe or Mrs Nottingham – quite the reverse, in fact – and I am distressed that they should have been induced so to interpret my article. Nevertheless, what they now believe they said at the time of the investigation conflicts with what, according to the case notes I made within a day or so of their statements, they said at the time. Memory is fallible and subject to a number of pressures, including the lapse of time – and forceful persuasion.

There is indeed, as Mr Playfair points out in his letter, a large dossier in the archives of the Society for Psychical Research (SPR), containing the accounts described by Mr Playfair and much else, and I hope interested readers of *The Unexplained* will join the SPR and take the time and trouble to study these documents for themselves and form their own conclusions. I am confident that they will agree with me. There is, as I have repeatedly told Mr Grosse, absolutely no point in indulging in emotional and rhetorical public confrontations in matters such as this. Issues of this kind must be carefully and coolly considered at leisure if anything worthwhile is to result. It is the arguments and their dispassionate exposition and examination that count, not whether or not their proposer is a professional academic. If Mr Grosse wishes his views to be considered publicly, he will have to publish them in adequate written form – and improve on Mr Playfair's unsatisfactory book, meeting the serious objections that have been raised against it.

Since the speech therapist consulted by Mr Playfair deemed it politic not to provide written evaluation of the evidence or to allow herself to be cited, I cannot see that quoting her views is of any value. According to Mr Playfair's own account, she spent hardly any time on the matter. I simply cannot see that there is any evidence whatever in favour of the paranormality of the 'voices'. Even if one of the girls had her mouth taped up efficiently on one of the occasions on which the 'voices' manifested themselves (and there is doubt about this), it would appear that no one was watching the other girl, who was also allegedly able to manifest the 'voice'.

Mr Grosse is mistaken if he imagines that I think of him as merely a doting father-figure, concerned only for the welfare of the Harper family. On the contrary, I have respect for him as an inventor, designer and businessman. In addition to being kind to the Harpers, however, he is also a forceful personality, capable of imposing on others his passionately held, and frequently and vehemently expressed, convictions; and this talent of his has greatly affected my evaluation of some of the other testimony.

My article on Enfield [see issue 123] was written at a time when I still thought that, despite the poverty of the later claims, some of the earlier testimony might conceivably have been of interest. I was thinking, in particular, of the statement by Woman Police Constable Carolyn Heeps given to Mr Playfair 10 days after the incident in question, to the effect that she had herself witnessed the paranormal movement of a chair. Here, it seemed, was an outside witness, and one who perhaps had a claim to special expertise as an observer. When I rang up WPC Heeps, she told me that she had *originally* thought that the children had moved the chair. However, she had become quite certain, and was still entirely convinced, that it was definitely a paranormal event, *after* 'Dr [sic] Grosse of the Society for Psychical Research' had proved it to be so. The most reasonable interpretation is that WPC Heeps was (and has remained) persuaded by Mr Grosse that what she had originally thought to be a normal event was in fact paranormal. It would seem that Mr Grosse unwittingly coached Mr Playfair's star witness.

The issue was still further confused when Mr Grosse rang me up, after I had published the above account in the *Journal* of the SPR and in the *Parapsychology Review*, in response to attacks from Mr Grosse and Mr Playfair respectively. Mr Grosse, who seemed distraught with rage and emotion (and who later apologised for what he had said), accused me of spreading untruths about himself; he claimed that he had never even set eyes on WPC Heeps and would not know what she looked like. She must, he assured me, have imagined that he had persuaded her after having heard him lecturing or on the radio. I advised Mr Grosse to write a letter to this effect to the editor of the SPR *Journal*, but he declined to do so.

Since this seemed to me to be an important issue, I immediately rang Miss Eleanor O'Keeffe, the SPR's secretary, and confirmed my telephone call by letter, informing her that Mr Grosse had said that he had never met WPC Heeps, and could therefore not have influenced her testimony. I also immediately informed Dr Beloff, as editor of the SPR *Journal*, that Mr Grosse denied ever having met WPC Heeps, since this made a difference to what I had written. Yet, within an hour of talking to me, Mr Grosse had apparently telephoned Miss O'Keeffe and told her that he *had* spoken to WPC Heeps – but for such a very short time that he could not possibly have influenced her in the way I had suggested!

The burden of proof that paranormal events have occurred always rests with the claimant. As I see it, the testimony in the Enfield case does not amount to anything remotely like sound positive evidence that the alleged events occurred, or that discarnate persons have an independent existence. I should be failing in my duty if, after giving so much time and care to examining the evidence, I allowed myself to be persuaded or browbeaten into withholding this conclusion from publication.

Yours faithfully,

Anita Gregory London

Send *your* letters to THE UNEXPLAINED, Orbis House, 20–22 Bedfordbury, London WC2N 4BT

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